THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI CHANDRADEO PRASAD VARMA): (a) No, Sir. During 1995-96 and 1996-97, 32 lakh and 41 lakh beneficiaries respectively were assisted under the National Old Age Pension Scheme, 8 lakh poor pregnant women respectively were assisted under the National maternity Benefit Scheme.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

Ensuring response from State Governments on Drinking Water Projects

4204. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received requests for drinking water projects in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that proper response and project details are not tendered by the Andhra Pradesh Government in response to the queries;

(c) the steps Government propose to ensure better response from State Governments in such matters; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT(SHRI CHANDRADEO PRASAD VARMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) After technical scurtiny of the projects by a team of experts, the State Government is requested either to furnish certain addition/clarification or to modify and submit and projects for further processing and clearance. It is a fact that at times and modification of the projects take some time. Since the initiative is taken by the State Government in getting the projects approved, no avoidable delay has been observed on the part of the State Government in the matter.

Increase in LPCD Norms

4205. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that it was agreed to increase the LPCD norms from 40 LPCD to 55 LPCD and allow 30 per cent private house connections in the Chief Ministers' meeting convened by the Prime Minister on the 4th July, 1996 in New Delhi;

(b) if so, the steps taken for implementation of the decisions;

(c) if no steps have been taken so far, the reasons therefor; and

(d) by when it would be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI CHANDRADEO PRASAD VARMA): (a) The Chief Minister's Conference held on 4-5 July, 19% had recommended that the present norms of 40 LPCD be revised to 55 LPCD.

(b) to (d) It is proposed to implement the above recommendation, after providing safe drinking water facilities as per the existing need to all the 'Not Covered' and 'Partially Covered' habitations.

Schemes for Upliftment of Rural Artisans

4206. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the details of schemes formulated/ implemented for the upliftment of rural artisans, so far, scheme-wise and State-wise;

(b) the additional facilities proposed to be provided to them during 1997-98; and

(c) the names of items manufactured under the said schemes during the last two years and the countries to which these items were exported?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE